

Working on roofs alone is a common occurrence in the roofing industry, where it is not unusual to have workers working on details away from the rest of the crew. One worker sometimes is sent out on a service job to repair a leak.

Every year fatalities occur to workers who were working alone at the time of the incident. In fact, a lone worker who has a serious injury is more likely to die, especially from a fall, due to the lack of prompt medical attention. The greatest risk to you when you are working alone is that no one is available to help you if you are injured or unconscious. Even if co-workers realize that someone is missing, it may be difficult to locate an incapacitated worker on a large roofing project. In addition, studies have shown that personnel working alone are more likely to take risks by cutting corners or by not following established roofing procedures.

Before sending you to work alone your foreman or supervisor must determine that the work involved poses no high hazard exposure. Under no circumstances should you go out alone to do work that may result in serious injury or death, such as working at the edge of a roof. When sending someone out to do service work it is impractical to anticipate or identify site hazards, and two workers should always be sent. When it is not possible to assign more than one worker, alternative arrangements should be made to provide for help or back-up. In every situation there should be an appropriate means of ensuring that at some stage contact with any worker can be made. Communication is crucial in accounting for personnel working alone. A system must be established where, at regular intervals, someone checks on the worker or the worker reports to a designated person. Where hazard exposure is high, intervals should be kept short. Again, working alone should not even be considered in some cases. Means of communicating should be predetermined and understood by all parties. Cellular telephones or two-way radios can provide effective communication. Always test the units on-site to ensure that reception is reliable before starting work.

Foremen who send workers out alone on site must always:

- Assess the risks and identify hazards before sending a worker out alone.
- Devise and implement safe working procedures to ensure that the risks and hazards are eliminated or adequately controlled.
- Check that people working alone do receive monitoring and supervision.
- Check that people working alone have received adequate training.
- *Remember*, a lone worker conducting work away at a customer's workplace is still the responsibility of the employer. Some states and municipalities have specific laws preventing exposing lone workers to hazardous situations.

